



## **Governor Encourages Support of Military Families**

The holidays are a time when we gather together with family and reflect on the year that has passed. As I look back on 2004, I am once again reminded of the strong character that we share as Kansans.

This year has seen more than 3,000 members of the Kansas National Guard and the Kansas Army Reserves be called to active duty. As we celebrate here, they are standing watch at posts around the globe, separated from their families, hoping for a Christmas card, care package or phone call home.

Their service is not forgotten. Numerous individuals and organizations have come to the aid of many families across Kansas through the Kansas Military Family Support Program, a network of volunteer organizations providing support to families with loved ones overseas.

My husband, Gary, decided this program would be one of his priorities. His father, Keith Sebelius, not only served on active duty, but served for years in the Reserves and continued his service as a leader of the American Legion. Gary grew up appreciating his father's service and wanted to honor this tradition in his own special way.

It has been heartwarming to see the response to this effort. Kansas military families with a member deployed to active duty now have volunteer services available in all 105 Kansas counties thanks to the generosity of twenty organizations.

The families of our soldiers make many adjustments and need our support to help them through this very stressful time.

This help takes many forms. Sometimes the family car needs an oil change, or the yard needs to be raked. Other times a simple letter or call of encouragement makes all the difference.

I'd like to share one story with you. In Leavenworth, a young man named Michael saw his mom – a single parent – off to Iraq. She was overseas when his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday came around, but thanks to the generosity of the Leavenworth Youth Achievement Center, the high school senior's birthday was one to remember.

Our neighbors in uniform give much and we owe it to them to help care for their families while they are away. To find out more about how you can help, or to volunteer your organization, visit [www.ksgovernor.org/milsupport.html](http://www.ksgovernor.org/milsupport.html).

On behalf of my family, I wish each and every one of you happy holidays. And because their sacrifices ensure our freedom, I pray for a safe and speedy return to each and every Kansan in uniform around the globe.